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Dr. Smith's development of his fundamental thesis that syntactical relations do not span wide spaces in English is thoroughgoing and conclusive. His constructively cumulative method again leads him to adduce numerous corroborative citations, happily chosen from a wide range of English literature. In the paragraph on the influence of distance on the concord of subject and predicate in such Northern phrases as *ye mak and bindis*, Dr. Smith concludes with the felicitous conceit, "The *is* ending is the alimony that the pronoun demands of the predicate for maintenance during separation." However in this very phrase the alimony of the *is* ending is demanded and obtained not by the masculine subject but by the feminine predicate.

In the third chapter the author traces the genesis of the so-called 'retained object,' *I was given a book*, from the passive *Mē was gegiefen ān bōc* (= 'To me was given a book'), in which the Old English pronominal dative retained the pre-verbal position of the active voice. "Thus *Me*," he writes, "by retaining its position in front of the verb, came to be the first word in the sentence; that is, it occupied the normal position of the subject. Once in the initial position the dative could not resist the subjectifying influences of its environment." By recalling such analogies as the relation of *I think to methinks*, Dr. Smith establishes historically a justification of this 'preposterous locution,' *I was given a book*, which, he points out, is included in the 'Don't' column of many of our best journals. The 'subjectifying influence of the pre-verbal position' is further shown by *Who did you see?* now the usual construction in colloquial English.

After considering the 'objectifying influence of the post-verbal position,' illustrated by *Woe is me* for the older *I am wo* and *Shall's* (= *Shall us*) instead of *Shall we*, Dr. Smith advances to the explanation of the idiom, *It is me*. He discovers four stages of evolution: (1)  *Ic hit eom* (to 1300 A. D.); (2) *It am I* (1300 to 1400); (3) *It is I* (1400 to 1500); (4) *It is me* (1500 to 1600). Rejecting the theory of Lounsbury that this last stage is due to an imitation of the French *c'est moi*; of Einkenel that emphasis has caused the predominance of *It is me* over *It is I*; of Jespersen that similarity in sound with *we, ye, he, she*,

caused the use of the accusative *me, thee*; Dr. Smith rightly sees in the choice of *me* a testimony to the objectifying influence of the post-verbal position. In this explanation he is in accord with the last view of Sweet (*New English Grammar*, § 1085), which is quoted in a footnote: "When a pronoun follows a verb, it generally stands in the objective relation; hence, on the analogy of *He saw me, Tell me*, etc., the literary *It is I* is made into *It is me* in the spoken language."

The introduction to the third chapter contains several trenchant illustrations of popular errors in construing English syntax. The line in the hymn, 'The Banner of the Cross' (p. 63), should read 'For Christ count everything but *loss*' instead of *lost*, a mistake repeated two lines below.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

### A POSSIBLE LOWELL ORIGIN.

*To the Editors of Mod. Lang. Notes.*

SIRS:—The first two stanzas of one of Lowell's best-known poems, *In the Twilight*, have a remarkable parallel in a passage in *The Story of Ali Nouredin and the Frank King's Daughter* in *The Thousand and One Nights*, tr. Payne, vol. VIII, pp. 63–80. There are few traces of oriental influence in Lowell, if by the oriental we mean the sensuous, though he has treated several oriental subjects. It is impossible to trace between these two passages any very convincing similarity of phrase, but the similarity of thought is, it will be seen, very marked. I recall that there are a few other passages in various authors where this same idea is touched upon, but nowhere, so far as I know, has it been so elaborately developed as in the two passages here compared. I italicise the passages most similar.

*In the Twilight.*

Men say the sullen instrument  
That, from the Master's bow,  
With songs of joy or woe,

Feels music's soul through every fibre sent,  
 Whispers the ravished strings  
 More than he knew or meant;  
*Old summers in its memory glow;  
 The secrets of the wind it sings;  
 It hears the April-loosened springs;  
 And mixes with its mood  
 All it dreamed when it stood  
 In the murmurous pine-wood,*  
 Long ago!

The magical moonlight then  
 Steeped every bough and cone;  
 The roar of the brook in the glen  
 Came dim from the distance blown;  
 The winds through its glooms sang low,  
 And it swayed to and fro,  
 With delight as it stood  
 In the wonderful wood,  
 Long ago.

"Then she uncovered her wrist, and laying the lute in her lap, bent over it, as the mother bends over her child, and swept the strings with the tips of her fingers, whereupon it *moaned and resounded and yearned after its former habitations; and it remembered the waters that gave it to drink, whilst yet in the tree*, and the earth whence it sprang and wherein it grew up, and the carpenters who cut it and the polishers who polished it, and the merchants who exported it and the ships that carried it; and it cried out and wailed and lamented; and it was as if she questioned it of all these things, and it answered her.

Whilom I was a tree wherein the nightingales did nest;  
 Whilst green my head, I swayed for them my longing and unrest,  
 They made melodious moan on me, and I their plaining learnt;  
 And so my secret was by this lament made manifest.  
 The woodman felled me to the earth, though guiltless of offense  
 And wrought of me a slender lute, by singer's hands carest;  
 But when their fingers sweep my strings,  
 They tell that I am slain,  
 One with duress among'st mankind afflicted and opprest."

If this was the source of Lowell's stanzas, it will be conceded that it was not bettered under his hands.

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#### A GREEK SOURCE FOR *Comus* 30.

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS:—The lines from *Comus* (27–32),

but this Ile  
 The greatest and the best of all the main  
 He quarters to his blu-hair'd deities  
*And all this tract that fronts the falling Sun*  
 A noble peer of mickle trust and power  
 Has in his charge,

but especially the line underscored, have a parallel in Aesch. *Supp.* 254–5,

Καὶ πᾶσαν αἶαν ἥς δὲ ἀγρὸς ἔρχεται  
 Στρυμῶν, τὸ πρὸς δύοντρος ἡλίου, κρατῶ.

And all the land through which clear Strymon goes,  
 That toward the setting sun, I rule.

It seems improbable that this similarity has not been noted before, but I do not find it in any of the annotated editions.

HERMAN SPENCER.

*High School, Bellevue, Pa.*

#### A REPLY.

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS:—In Mr. Onions's review of my *Studies in English Syntax*, published in *Englische Studien*, xxxvii, 217–220, certain statements are made to which I wish briefly to reply. It is understood that I do not charge Mr. Onions with purposely misrepresenting my views.

1. Mr. Onions says: "Professor Smith maintains, and rightly, that there is too much 'counting' in the syntactical research of to-day, and too little weighing, but he unfortunately makes this an excuse for ceasing to count altogether."

By no means. My little book, even in the preface, makes it perfectly clear that I believe in counting. No day goes by that I do not collect and record syntactical *data*. But counting is only a means to an end. The *data* collected must serve as the basis of constructive generalization. I cannot better express my own views than by a citation from Darwin. On December 21, 1859, he wrote to J. D. Hooker as follows<sup>1</sup>: "It is an old and firm conviction of mine that the Naturalists who accumulate facts and make many partial generalizations are the *real* benefactors of science. Those who merely accumulate facts I cannot very much respect."

2. "The peculiarities in nearly all the Biblical examples that he quotes," says Mr. Onions, "can be traced to the originals."

This makes no difference. The language of the Authorized Version of the Bible has a unity and consistency of its own. The translators were not slavish copyists. They made English idiom supreme. They adopted the Hebrew or Greek idiom only when in their judgment such idiom was in accord with the genius of their own language, the English. The sentences that I cite from the Bible are characteristic not only of the

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, edited by his son, vol. II, p. 21.